America, nor anything more readily admitted by all, than the powerful and graceful manner in which these people, by a lifetime of practice, ride and manage the Horse. They are cruel masters, yet no people set a higher value on the merits of a good horse, nor any perhaps who take greater care, or exercise greater skill, in cultivating and maintaining in them a bold and hardy spirit. The Indian's cruelty to the horse is confined to the occasional incredible gallops which they force them through with great sternness, but which they are paid for by a life chiefly of freedom, and exemption from the first cruelty that is practised by the hands of civilized man, the more than barbarous cruelty of the knife.

The range of country to which the sagacity of the wild horses has driven them before the advance of their enemy Man, as with the buffaloes, is now confined to a strip of the prairie country near the base of the Rocky Mountains; and in the view of the band here presented, is also given a faithful portrait from Nature, justly illustrating the character of that part of the American prairies, with a slight glimpse of the perpetually snow-capped summits of parts of the Rocky Mountains in the distance, which are often seen in clear weather, with great distinctness, over a range of sixty or seventy miles.

Plate Nº 4.

CATCHING THE WILD HORSE.

Taking the wild horse and "breaking him down" is one of the proudest feats of the Indian, and requires the sudden rallying, and desperate use, of all his manly faculties; and even with the complete exhaustion of all these he is often compelled to relinquish his pursuit in despair. The most frequent mode of catching the horse is by "throwing the laso," from the back of a horse at full speed, as is seen in the distant part of this picture; and by "choking the animal down," as is seen in the group in the foreground. For this desperate feat the Indian prepares his laso, which is a braided thong, made of raw hide, fifteen or twenty yards in length, and coiled upon his left arm, with a noose at the end of it; which, when he throws out its coil, drops over the horse's neck. This done, by holding back upon the other end of the laso, or by having it fastened to the girth of his own horse, he gradually tightens it upon his running victim's neck, until its speed is materially checked by the stoppage of its breath. He then dismounts, and leaves his riding horse, balancing on his feet as he is dragged along by his strangling prize, until it falls from exhaustion. He then instantly rushes upon his game, and having fastened a pair of hobbles on its fore-feet, and a short halter, with a noose, firmly around its under jaw, loosens the laso around the neck, enabling the horse to breathe; and leaning back with the weight of his body and all his strength, at the end of the halter, to prevent the horse from rising upon its feet or from throwing itself over and receiving an injury by falling upon its back.

In this struggle, which is called "breaking-down," and generally lasts about half an hour, there is a desperate contention for the mastery, which is easily seen to be decided by reason and invention, rather than by superiority in brute force. The Indian leans back upon his halter, which is firmly held in both hands, and as the horse is getting breath and strength to rise, repeatedly checks it, preventing it from gaining any advantage; and gradually advances, hand over hand upon the tightened halter, towards the horse's head, until the poor, affrighted, trembling, and conquered animal, covered with foam, allows the caressing hand of its new master to pat it on the nose, and in a few minutes to cover its eyes, when the exchange of a few deep-drawn breaths from their meeting nostrils seems to compromise the struggle; the animal discovering in its conqueror, instead of an enemy, a friend, who has from that moment little else to do than to mount upon its back, with the halter around its jaw, and ride it into camp, his willing slave for the rest of its life.

In these desperate struggles the finest and the fleetest of the band are seldom if ever overtaken; nor would such misfortune often befall the hindmost, were it not that the pursuing horse gets advantage of the ground, and shortens the distance, by the superior judgment and guidance of man.

Plate Nº 5.

BUFFALO CHASE.

In this picture we have the Indian mounted on his wild horse, which he has captured in the mode described above; and thus converting it to his use, as the means of procuring his subsistence. For want of the fleetness and fangs of the ferocious brutes, Man has wisely been endowed with reason and invention which have enabled him to use the legs of the horse, and to construct deadly weapons, as the means of holding his ascendency over all the beasts of the forest, and of appropriating so much of their substance as is necessary for the clothing and subsistence of his family.

The wild horse is the swiftest animal of the American prairies; and the Indian, from his well-trained horse's back, with his sinewy bow and lance, easily deals death to the quadrupeds of the country; having, from a lifetime of practice, rendered himself quite equal in the chase, to the most skilful of hunters; and in war, to the most efficient cavalry of lancers and bowmen in the world.

Here is seen the mode in which the Indian generally approaches the Buffalo, always on the right (or off side) of the animal, that he may throw his arrow or strike with his lance, to the left. The death is usually produced when the animal and the horse